



## The Skinny on Sun Exposure

Skin cancer accounts for more than half of the cancer cases in the United States each year. And most of the more than 1 million cases of non-melanoma skin cancer diagnosed annually in the United States are considered to be sun-related. Basal or squamous cell cancers are the most common non-melanoma forms of skin cancer.

Most non-melanoma skin cancers develop on sun-exposed areas of the body, like the face, ears, neck, lips, and the backs of the hands. Depending on the type, they can be fast or slow growing, but they rarely spread to other parts of the body.

**Melanoma skin cancers account for over 8,000 deaths a year.** Advise your employees to see their doctors early if they have any signs or symptoms of skin cancer, such as:

- Any change on the skin, especially in the size or color of a mole or other darkly pigmented growth or spot, or a new growth
- Scaliness, oozing, bleeding, or change in the appearance of a bump or nodule
- The spread of pigmentation beyond its border such as dark coloring that spreads past the edge of a mole or mark
- A change in sensation, itchiness, tenderness, or pain

**Train employees to protect themselves from skin cancer by limiting their exposure to the sun.** This precaution can not only prevent skin cancer, but also protect workers from sunburn, premature skin aging, and eye damage. In general:

- Avoid outdoor activities between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Stay in the shade if you are outside during the midday.
- Understand that ultraviolet (UV) rays will penetrate clouds, so it is possible to get a bad sunburn even on a cloudy day.
- Know your risk factors for skin cancer, which include a fair complexion, family history, multiple or atypical moles, and severe sunburns as a child.

**Instruct employees to take these precautions** if they must be outside during peak sunshine hours:

- Use sunscreen and lip balm with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher.
- Apply a generous amount of sunscreen (about a palmful) several minutes before going outside.
- Reapply every 2 hours as well as after swimming, toweling dry, or perspiring.
- Wear a broad brimmed hat to protect your head, ears, and neck.

# **Safety News**

**Advise workers to choose proper clothing** to offer further protection. Light-colored, lightweight, and loosely woven fabrics do not offer much protection from the sun. Instead, choose:

- Dark-colored clothing made of tightly woven fabric
- Sun-protective clothing that has been treated with a chemical sunblock during the manufacturing process
- A fabric with an Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF) rating of 50, which allows only 1/50th of the sun's UV rays to pass through. (To receive the Skin Cancer Foundation's Seal of Recommendation, sun-protective fabrics must have a minimum UPF of 30.)

Employees can also wash sun protection into their clothes with an approved laundry additive that increases the protection and lasts through 20 washings.

**Make sure employees protect their eyes as well.** Advise them to read the label on sunglasses carefully.

- Wear sunglasses with 99 percent to 100 percent UV absorption to provide optimal protection for the eyes and the surrounding skin.
- Get sunglasses that block both forms of UV radiation—UVA and UVB.
- Don't assume that you get more UV protection with pricier sunglasses or glasses with a darker tint.
- Select wraparound glasses that offer side protection.

## **Why It Matters**

- Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer; it accounts for over one-half of all cancers.
- Melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer, will account for about 60,000 cases of skin cancer annually and about 8,000 deaths.
- Even for melanoma, if it is diagnosed early, the 5-year localized survival rate is 99 percent.

*Source: BLR Safety Daily Advisor, June 11, 2010*